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ABSTRACT

With over half of mothers of school-age children in the labor force, there is a growing need for after-school child care. This paper describes an after-school program in a small Kansas elementary school. Of a total school enrollment of 270 students, 120 are enrolled in the after-school program. Activities include story telling, crafts, computers, quiet room, Spanish club, math club, cooking classes, refreshments, and outside play when weather permits. The program is free. Two teachers direct the program, and volunteers help with many of the activities. For educators considering an after-school program, specific advice is offered on costs and funding sources, handling facilities conflicts, transportation options, staff and duties, focus of the program (babysitting versus educational experience), discipline, and program planning. A list of possible activities, sample monthly schedules, and a form letter about discipline problems are included. (SV)

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P. M. ACADEMY

(A Latch-key Alternative)

by

Jill Hull
Patricia Osborne

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Jill Hull

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Speech presented at Small Schools: Image for a New Age Conference at Kansas State October, 1990

This is room 207. Our presentation is P.M. Academy, A Latch Key Alternative. My name is Jill Hull. And my name is Pat Osborne. We are co-directors of VALLEY HEIGHTS USD 498's after school program for students K-6th. We would like to share with you some of our successes and failures as we implemented this program.

We two were not the originators of this idea in our district. Two years ago our Superintendent, Mr. David Walters, saw a need in our district for this program and applied for a grant to Social Rehabilitation Services. He was given funding in the amount of $2,600 for this pilot program. You might want to check into this source of funding. Presently, Mr. Walters is serving on the committee to review and approve funding of the S.R.S. school projects. The 30 schools that recently applied each received approximately 80% of the funds requested. We are fortunate enough to have a trust fund set up solely for "education in the city of Waterville" and that fund has been tapped for the continuation of our program.

You will need to decide for your district if a need exists for a similar program and if you can meet that need. The concern for Latchkey children is growing nationwide.

To quote syndicated columnist Anna Quindlen:

> Some of the most popular baby sitters in the city are named Nintendo, Bugs Bunny and the Brady Bunch. Some of the most popular human babysitters are 9 or 10 or 11 years old. If there are few good places that care for toddlers all day there are even fewer that will take care of a 10 year old for 3 hours. Latchkey kids, we call them, and estimates of their number range from 2 million to 12 million. But they are latchkey kids in a deadbolt world. There are good after school programs, and good summer programs, too. There are not enough of them, and not nearly enough that are inexpensive, or free.
>
> This is the world as it is. One estimate has it that 75 percent of mothers with school age children will be in the labor force by 1995. Whether there are 2, 12 or 20 million, many of these children can't take good care of themselves. Or even if they can, they're not in a world that takes good care of them.

To quote Dr. Ernest Boyer, head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching:

> "We have a huge mismatch between the school calendar and the realities of family life. Children spend a huge amount of time alone without any interaction with adults. We can begin to turn the hands of the school clock forward slowly. The first step is to extend an optional after school program of education and recreation in every district.

We would like to take you on a brief amateur tour of how we spend our time from 3:30 to 6:00 each evening.

Welcome to Valley Heights P.M. Academy, a unique alternative for Latchkey children. We will escort you through a typical night at P.M. Academy.

We begin our tour when school dismisses at 3:20 P.M. Waterville students leave their classrooms and meet in the school library. Roll call is taken and the children go to the playground for approximately 20 minutes.

The Blue Rapids bus arrives about 3:40. These children convene in the library for roll call and then join the others on the playground.

A bell at 3:50 summons all children to return to the school building. Grades Kindergarten through second sit in the school entryway and those in third through sixth grade go to the gym. The children now listen to a story read by a teacher or an aide.

As the story ends, the children are given the group choices for the evening. Tonight they may choose computers, crafts, quiet room, Spanish club or math club. We will visit each group to see what they are doing. Groups take turns going for snacks.

Our first stop is crafts. The children are busy making small projects which they can take home when they are finished. We try to have projects that can be finished in an hour or less because of a lack of storage space for incomplete projects. Older children may work on projects that take several days to complete.

Our next stop finds children in the quiet room. Here they may draw, read, play games quietly or do homework. Some children will be brought to this room to be tutored. We try to tutor for 10-15 minutes and then allow the child to return to his or her chosen group.

Computers are a favorite of P.M. students. We use the Apple Computers from the regular classrooms. Many of our programs are MECC. Some favorite programs are Word Munchers, Number Munchers, Oregon Trail, Path Tactics,and Where in the USA is Carmen Sandiago. There are now seven computers and that will be increased by two in the near future. We are experimenting with alternating nights allowing K-2 access to the computers one night and the older

students the next as we had some nights with 3-4 people per computer.

Now we visit our young chefs as they prepare pizzas. They are all excited and as they finish cooking them the looks on their faces are something to behold.

This is the math club preparing to write math problems about the outside world. The math club has been in existence for several years and Mrs. Fishney and Mrs. Osborne continued it as part of P.M. Academy. Attendance runs about 30 fourth, fifth & sixth graders.

Our next stop is the gym where refreshments are served. This is a favorite part of P. M. Academy. We try to make our snacks easy to eat and nutritionally sound. One of the favorites is apple slices with cream cheese dip. Providing snacks has become more of a job with our increased enrollment. Our senior aide frequently prepares snacks at home for use the next day.

Spanish is a special class offered on Thursday nights to grades 4-6. Mrs. Lancaster, the high school Spanish instructor, teaches the class. Tonight she has brought a special guest from Costa Rica. Let's listen as the group recites for their guest.

At 5:15 the groups finish their projects, programs, etc. and head once again for the gym or playground. Some staff accompany the children while other staff starts the cleanup procedures and return the computers to the classrooms. Children play until their parents call for them or they walk home at 5:30. We see the parents as they come to escort their children home. Believe it or not, many beg to stay a few minutes longer to finish a computer program or a project.

This has been a typical day at P.M. Academy. Some days there are special programs and projects. The routine is changed as conditions demand. In inclement weather, all play must be indoors.

We hope you have enjoyed your video tour of P.M. Academy. We invite you to come and visit us anytime.

Using enrollment in the Academy as a sign of success, we feel our endeavor has been worthwhile. We currently have an enrollment of 125 out of a total school enrollment of 270. Our per night attendance has gone from about 30 to an average of 50 to 80. I just heard that a school in Atchinson offering an after hours program at a charge of $10 per week only has an enrollment of 20. Free babysitting is a draw for our Academy.

Another good sign is that as our public becomes more aware of the program, we have more people volunteering their services for special programs. We have had volunteers teach Babysitting classes, Latchkey Training and Personal Safety. Hair Care, and help make crafts, haunted houses and apply Halloween makeup.

Here are some things for you to consider before you start an after school program:

1. **Funding.** Our cost last year for seven months was over $8,000. This year we will add two new computers, more expensive crafts, snacks for more students, cooking classes and three additional part-time certified staff. How will you fund your program?

2. **Facilities.** Your activities must fit the rooms or space you have available. You may have conflict with janitorial services. There may be conflict with other scheduled district uses of your building. There may be teachers who work late or who do not wish others to use their room. You must work cooperatively with all these people. Our biggest conflict has been that we must give up the gym to Junior Hi basketball and volleyball practice. This means that if the weather is bad, we don't have much space for energetic play which the children need after sitting in school all day.

3. **Transportation** . Our busses deliver our children from the other attendance center. Children who live out of town must be picked up after P.M. Academy. Many parents car pool to save themselves the drive every night. In town children walk home unless the weather is unusually bad.

We have no strong dismissal policy such as checking a child's name off a list when that child leaves. Last year we ran from room to room telling children when it was time for them to leave. We have found that most children are good clock watchers and know when it is time for them to leave. We know the children and their parents but in a larger district you might need proof that the person may take the child and some record of when they left.

Sometimes you may have the problem that no one comes after a child. We usually make phone calls or take the child home. We do not leave a child in the building without supervision.

4. **Staff and Duties:** We have many duties as co-directors of this program. We found out by experience last year that we needed to train the other members of our staff and inform them of their duties and what was expected.
We must make a schedule for each month. We decide the special projects we wish to do and then call volunteers if they are needed. It is a challenge at times to think of new programs that the children will enjoy. We ask our staff to brainstorm with us. A calendar goes to each child at the beginning of the month. They may come to special events even if it is not a night they regularly attend. They need

the calendar to plan when they will attend. Please see appendix A.

We also spend about an hour a week making a weekly schedule with the duties for each person each night. We try to rotate jobs. This becomes a challenge. We tried last year to have different events on different nights such as Wednesday-computers: Monday-drama; Friday-games. We found this wasn't successful. Now we offer computers; quiet room for drawing, studying, and games; and crafts every night. Special events are added to this schedule. See Appendix B.

Last year, we realized at the end of the year that there was a burn-out factor. We both teach full time so that means we were at the school five days a week from about 7:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. or later. Many nights we don't leave until after 7:00 p.m. which makes for a very long day. We have P.M. everyday except days with early dismissal. This year we each work at P.M. four days a week and have one day off. The other certified personnel work 1,2, or 3 nights a week so they should not experience such rapid burn out. Our aides work five days a week unless they have other scheduled events. Two of our aides are cheerleaders and miss work because of practice or early bus trips to games. Our older aide leaves early on short trips so we hope this refreshes her. The third aide is active in FFA and will be visiting colleges as she is a senior.

We have found that we must supervise our teenage aides. Some need more supervision than others. We try to choose aides that we can leave alone with a group of children without adult supervision. We do, however, check on them from time to time.

You also need to decide on what type of staff you will need. Do you want all adults? Perhaps you want a combination of adults and teenagers. Certified personnel are more expenseive. We have three certified people every night, one grandmotherly aide, and three high school aides. We have one male teacher one night a week. We have had volunteer males and we think some children need the male image.

5. **Focus of program:** Do you want a babysitting program or an educational experience? We try to follow a middle road. We have some educational experiences such as tutoring, math club, and science activities. On the other end of the spectrum we offer crafts, sandpile and musical games.

These were some of the lofty goals we had as beginners:
1. Children will learn to play some traditional board games.
2. Children will do activities that will increase attention span.
3. Children and teachers will relate to each other in something other than a classroom setting.
4. We would keep children from being babysat by t.v.

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5. We would furnish time for activities we couldn't fit into the regular school day.
6. We would provide a safe and caring environment for children.
7. Children would become more nurturing and caring toward younger children.

We have met some of the goals. We feel we have been successful in relating to children in a different situation. Pat enjoys learning to know the younger students and Jill enjoys seeing former students. We are keeping children away from the t.v. and we are providing a safe and caring environment with activities for which there is no time during the day. We see some heart warming moments on the playground and in special events as older children take time to help younger ones. We see an occasional heart-stopping moment when a larger child appears to be heading toward a crash with a smaller one in a kickball or football game. We have been lucky to have no major injuries and our children do play carefully.

We have not been successful in teaching traditional board games and increasing attention span of children. We do some tutoring but not as much or as effectively as we would like. Children are tired of school and in no mood to study.

6. DISCIPLINE..Last year we had no set policy. This year we have form letters which go home informing parents of incidents. After three such letters home, the child is not to return to P.M.

7. PLANNING PROGRAMS CHILDREN LIKE: Some activities we have tried that have been failures are: dominoes, jigsaw puzzles, group games, drama,and counted cross stitch. Children didn't take the responsibility for memorizing lines for a play. Children tend to start something like a game, play for a few minutes, and then want to change activities.

Some real successes have been:computer, beads, sandpile, free drawing time, football and cheerleading practice, math club and Halloween make-up and making a haunted house. For students in our own classrooms, it is a sure thing that they will get their homework done since we know that they need to do it. Children in other classrooms however, have to admit to having homework and have to arrive with the papers necessary to accomplish the job. Some teachers cooperate to say what we might tutor their student in and even offer supplies.

To sum up our program, I would say that directors of after school programs have to be like ducks--smooth sailors on the surface and paddling like hell underneath. Again, you are welcome to visit us any evening. Sometimes is it more chaotic than others and we're sure that will be the night you pick!

Thank you for your time and consideration of this program. Please feel free to pick up handouts of our sample calendars, discipline letter, weekly schedule and program actities.

ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS?

THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR AN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

1. Funding
2. Facilities
3. Transportation
4. Staff and duties
5. Focus of program
6. Discipline
7. Planning program that children like
8. Homework/tutoring
9. Repeated events
10. Age differences
11. Days of operation

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES FOR A P.M. ACADEMY

1. Play dough
2. Baseball cards, show, trade, speaker
3. Checkers
4. Paper dolls
5. Sign language
6. Drawing
7. Planting
8. Books
9. Story time
10. Flower ornaments
11. Kickball
12. Soccer
13. Remote control cars
14. Barbie dolls
15. Cooking
16. Stamp club
17. Travel programs
18. Board games
19. Computer
20. Rockets
21. Cheerleading
22. Cross Stitch
23. Puzzles
24. Bowling
25. Contest entry
26. Square dance
27. Model building
28. Football
29. Basketball
30. Hunter safety
31. Miniature car night
32. Cartooning
33. Painting
34. Bike Rodeo
35. Tennis
36. Golf
37. Latchkey training
38. Bird watching
39. Foreign Language
40. Hiking
41. Cabbage Patch dolls
42. Math club
43. Spelling Club
44. Babysitting Classes

OCTOBER

	1 Drawing Lessons	2 Drawing Lessons	3 Math Club Pat Mahoney- Cooking for K-2	4 Spanish 4-6 Things that Fly - Richard Henoch	5 Crafts - Alice King	6
7	8 Hair Care 3-6th Nancy Palmblade	9 Hair Ribbons - Laura Musil Drawing Lessons	10 Math Club Pat Mahoney - Cooking for K-2	11 Spanish 4-6 Things That Fly Richard Henoch	12 Pat Mahoney- Cooking for 3-6	13
14	15 NO P.M. ACADEMY	16 Hair Ribbons - Laura Musil Drawing Lessons	17 Math Club Pat Mahoney - Cooking for K-2	18 Spanish 4-6 Things That Fly Richard Henoch	19 Pat Mahoney - Cooking for 3-6	20
21	22 Hair Care - K-2 Nancy Palmblade Make-up 4,5&6	23 4-6 Babysitting Kathy Steinfort Drawing Lessons Make-up Gr. 2&3	24 Math Club Make-up K-1	25 NO P.M. ACADEMY	26 NO P.M. ACADEMY	27
28	29 Make Haunted House Gr.4-6	30 Make Haunted House Gr. 4-6	31 Math Club Tour of Haunted House			

Dear _____,

_____behavior in P.M. Academy was not appropriate tonight. He/she has been informed about his/her behavior. The inappropriate behaviors are listed below. We would appreciate it if you would encourage them to behave properly. This is your child's _____ warning. After the third warning they will not be allowed to attend P.M. Academy. Thank you.

Inappropriate behavior(s):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Pat Osborne
Jill Hull

DAY	3:20 - 3:50 Activity / Staff	3:50 - 4:00 Activity / Staff	4:00 - 5:15 Activity / Staff	5:15 - 5:30 Activity / Staff	STAFF	NOTES
MON.	Playground Pat C Becky Get Equipment & Supplies Lacey + Cindy Snacks Jill	Read K-2 Lacey 3-6 Becky	I Computers Becky K-2 II Crafts Lacey + Cindy III Quiet Jill IV Tutoring V Special Haunted House more Pat C. 4-6	Playground Jill Lacey Clean-up Pat O. Becky Cindy	Pat O. Becky Jill ~~Pat M.~~ Cindy Lacey	
TUES.	Playground Alice Pat O. Get Equipment & Supplies Randy Lacey Jill Snacks Cindy	Read K-2 Alice 3-6 Randy	I Computers Lacey 3-6 II Crafts Alice Jill III Quiet Cindy IV Tutoring Jill V Special more Haunted House Randy. Pat C 4-6	Playground Alice Cindy Clean-up Lacey Jill Randy	Jill Alice Randy Cindy Lacey Pat M.	
WED.	Playground Pat C. Becky Cindy Get Equipment & Supplies Jill Alice, Randy Snacks Lacey	Read K-2 Jill 3-6 Pat O	I Computers Alice K-2 II Crafts Randy III Quiet Lacey IV Tutoring V Special Haunted House Hours Cindy Math Club - Pat + Becky	Playground Alice Lacey Cindy Clean-up Pat C. Becky Randy	Pat O. Becky Alice Randy Cindy Lacey Pat M. Pats ?	
THURS.	Playground Pat C. Lacey Get Equipment & Supplies Richard Cindy Snacks Jill	Read K-2 Cindy 3-6 Richard	I Computers Cindy 3-6 II Crafts Lacey / Jill III Quiet Pat C. IV Tutoring V Special Things that fly - Richard	Playground Richard Cindy Clean-up Lacey Jill Pat C.	Jill Pat O. Richard Cindy Lacey Pat M.	
FRI.	Playground Get Equipment & Supplies Snacks	Read K-2 3-6 NO	I Computers II Crafts III Quiet IV Tutoring V Special	Playground Clean-up	Jill Pat O. Alice Cindy Lacey Pat M.	Parent - Teacher Conferences

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